

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****June 28, 2016****Page 1 of 2****SUBJECT: FORT WORTH TRUANCY COURT**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide information related to changes to the City of Fort Worth (CFW) and Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) Truancy Court.

The comprehensive truancy intervention program in collaboration with FWISD was the first truancy court established in the State of Texas. The Fort Worth Truancy Court was established through an inter-local agreement with the FWISD in January of 2001; at the urging of the FWISD to provide a dedicated court in which truancy related cases can be heard timely and punishments consistently imposed. The Court held its first session on April 16, 2001 in a portable building adjacent to Eastern Hills High School (5701 Meadowbrook Drive) and moved to a permanent building at that location in August of 2004.

The truancy court was operated by the Fort Worth Municipal Court and was funded primarily by the FWISD, and augmented by Juvenile Case Manager Fee (JCMF). Operational hours of Monday through Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm. The court was staffed with one (1) Municipal Judge, one (1) City Prosecutor, one (1) Senior Human Services Specialist, two (2) Senior Customer Service Representatives, and two (2) Deputy City Marshals.

Under the previous contract, the FWISD and CFW were obligated to jointly operate the Court. The CFW contributed \$232,509 of the program's \$540,903 annual cost in FY2016. The Juvenile Case Manager Fee (JCMF) was utilized to offset the city's portion by \$168,557. The FWISD can file up to 3,000 cases (1,500 Truancy/1,500 Parent Contributing) without incurring any additional fees.

Over the last two years the decision of FWISD to focus on preventative measures, in conjunction with the adoption of House Bill 2398 (effective September 1, 2015), contributed to a significant decline in filings to the Truancy Court. In light of these trends, a joint agreement between the CFW and the FWISD was reached to not renew the inter-local agreement for a dedicated truancy court. On February 22, 2016 the FWISD School Board voted to end the district's financial and facility commitments to the truancy court, effective the end of the current inter-local agreement dated June 30, 2016.

The City Attorney's Office has reported that they reviewed a total of 183 truancy referrals during the 2015-2016 school year. A majority of those cases were returned to the FWISD for additional information. It is important to note that these numbers do not reflect any Parenting Contributing to truancy cases. As the city attorney and FWISD continue to work through the logistics of the filings, the court will stay in constant communication with both entities.

As of June 6th, 2016, the city has transitioned all truancy related filings to the Southwest Municipal Court (SWMC). This allowed for the court to consolidate all juvenile related case activity to be held at the SWMC including the Teen Court Program. Other benefits include extended hours

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every Monday to provide court services after 5 p.m., free parking and location by a major freeway for ease and accessibility.

The court was able to retain current personnel by reallocating the one (1) Municipal Judge position to Southwest to SWMC and using this position to backfill the current vacancy therefore not having to utilize temporary judges for the balance of the FY2016. This position will be retained in the FY2017 with the reduction of temporary judge funding. The one (1) Senior Human Service Specialist and two (2) Senior Customer Service Representatives will continue to be paid from the dedicated JCMF and the two (2) Deputy City Marshal Deputy City Marshals will be reassigned to the Public Safety Building into currently vacant positions. This allows for the positions assigned to the Truancy Court facility to be eliminated as part of the FY2017 Budget Process.

If you have any questions please contact Theresa Ewing, Municipal Court Director at (817) 392-7461.

David Cooke
City Manager